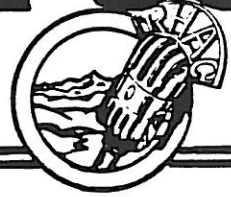


# RETURN WITH US

The Radio Historical  
Association of Colorado

# NOW...



VOLUME 9, NUMBER 3

SEPTEMBER 1983

# Judy



# Canova







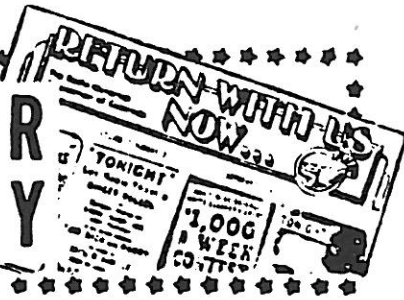
## RHAC TAPE LIBRARY

<u>REEL 356</u>	<u>JOHN DUNNING INTERVIEWS</u>	1200'
1L	6-5-83 D-Day Program With John MacVane & Larry Lesueur 6-12-83 Phil Leslie	
2L	6-12-83 Phil Leslie - Concluded	
1R	6-19-83 Whitfield Connor & Parley Baer 7-10-83 Frank Bresee	
2R	7-10-83 Frank Bresee - Concluded	
<u>REEL 357</u>	<u>THE RAILROAD HOUR</u>	1200'
1L	9-17-51 Rip Van Winkle 6-14-50 The Necklace	
2L	11-10-52 Dearest Enemy 1-2-50 The Red Mill	
1R	5-5-52 Sunny 8-11-52 The Brownings	
2R	11-5-51 Rose Marie 6-2-52 The Minstrel Boy	
<u>REEL 358</u>	<u>THE RAILROAD HOUR</u>	1200'
1L	12-5-49 The Mikado 12-17-51 Rosalie	
2L	1-23-50 The Merry Widow 4-17-50 Madame Sherry	
1R	10-9-50 Roberta 10-23-50 Revenge With Music	
2R	10-30-50 Showboat 11-6-50 Irene	
<u>REEL 359</u>	<u>ROGERS OF THE GAZETTE</u>	1200'
1L	9-16-53 Illyria Box Supper 9-23-53 Farm Day Sale	
2L	10-8-53 Leah's "Eudora Notes" 10-15-53 Maggie And Barbara	
1R	10-22-53 Eula Horner And The Country Fair 10-29-53 The Old Cornet	
2R	11-5-53 The Toast Of Vienna - Gretchen March 11-11-53 The Town Clock	

## RHAC TAPE LIBRARY

<u>REEL 360</u>	<u>THE KRAFT MUSIC HALL</u>	1200'
1L	2-17-44 Guest: Cass Daley 2-24-44 Guest: Phil Silvers	
2L	3-2-44 Guest: Lucille Ball 3-9-44 Guest: George Murphy	
1R	3-22-45 Guest: Frankie Carl 3-30-44 Guest: George Murphy	
2R	4-6-44 Guest: The Kraft Choral 4-13-44 Guest: Bob Hope	
<u>REEL 361</u>	<u>FIBBER McGEE AND MOLLY</u>	1200'
1L	2-25-47 Fibber Replaces Glass In Front Window 3-4-47 Trouble With The Postal Department	
2L	3-11-47 People Only Need 4 Hours Sleep Per Night 3-18-47 Fibber Waits In The Rain All Day	
1R	3-25-47 The Home Power Generator Plant 4-1-47 Involved In Safe Driving Campaign	
2R	4-8-47 Molly Sprains Ankle While Cleaning 4-15-47 Fibber Loses His 1880 Quarter	
<u>REEL 362</u>	<u>MISCELLANEOUS SHOWS</u>	1200'
1L	7-19-45 THE DOCTOR FIGHTS: Lips For The Trumpet 4-18-48 CBS IS THERE: Battle Of Plassey	
2L	4-25-48 CBS IS THERE: The Fall Of Troy 9-12-48 TELL IT AGAIN: Kidnapped	
1R	4-11-48 CBS IS THERE: The Last Day Of Pompeii 11-2-39 COLUMBIA WORKSHOP: Blenauhasett	
2R	11-16-39 COLUMBIA WORKSHOP: A Letter From Above KNICKERBOCKER PLAYHOUSE: Love On A Shoestring	
<u>REEL 363</u>	<u>JUDY CANOVA SHOW</u>	1200'
1L	8-24-43 A Date With Mickey Rooney 8-31-43 Getting The Pig Back To Rancho Canova	
2L	9-7-43 Getting Mineral Water For Her Pig, Lover Boy 10-12-43 In Jail For Breaking Into Cary Grant's House	
1R	10-19-43 Just Back From Army Camp-Pistol Packin' Mama 11-9-43 Judy Into Hollywood To Get A Turkey	
2R	11-16-43 Description Of A Prize Fight 2-29-44 Just Back From Rancho Canova-Motel Into Rest Home	

# COVER STORY



When she was a kid, Judy Canova once wrote that she wasn't a happy child. She was a "fat tubby" and on the homely side. Still she insisted on wearing the fancy dresses that made other girls her age beautiful but which made her ludicrous. She looked about as broad as she was long, and thus only succeeded in incurring the teasing and laughter of playmates.

The only thing that could take her mind off herself and her personal unhappiness was music. Born Julia Etta, she started singing popular songs on a Jacksonville, Florida, radio station together with her brother Zeke and her sister Anne when she was just twelve. When she sang she would forget her troubles.

Although her mother took her three children to the Carolina hills for the summer, Judy stayed inside her cabin unhappy and sober-faced. She used to listen to the mournfully amusing sound of the native hill people. She had forgotten how to laugh, but found herself chuckling at the nasal twang of the voices, the funny words, the odd pronunciations—the song lore of the hillbilly! In the weeks there in those Carolina hills, she committed to memory every song she heard, every nasal-twang, every oddity of pronunciation. It became her idea to do a routine with this hillbilly music in it.

In 1933 the three singing Canovas headed for the bright lights of New York. The Village Barn advertised for a hillbilly act, and the Canovas dragged out Judy's mountain songs, bought some calico and got the job. The honest laughter of those nightly packed houses paid off. After the Barn, a 70-week RKO vaudeville tour, an audition and contract for the Rudy Vallee program in 1933, a chance at an important stage show, *CALLING ALL STARS*, in 1934 with Gertrude Niesen, more radio, her first Broadway review, "The Ziegfeld Follies of 1936," and then Hollywood.

Her big break in Hollywood was a bit part without billing in *IN CALIFORNIA*. Wini Shaw, a popular singer of the day, was to sing "The Lady In Red" in a nightclub scene, and one of the most beautiful and extravagant production numbers had been created by producer Busby Berkeley. Just as it ended, from behind a pillar Judy appeared in a costume resembling Wini Shaw's. The moment she opened her mouth to sing all the effect created by the original performance was destroyed. The audience howled. Judy immediately got other parts suited to her hillbilly hokum. Few knew that the absurd voice she used to butcher songs with had been trained for classical singing.

In the summer of 1943 she landed her own radio show for the Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company. She surrounded herself with a complement of comedians in a program which depicted a socially aspiring "unacceptable" and her snooty neighbors. Ruby Dandridge was boisterously blithe and giggly "Geranium!" Judy's maid and cook; Hans Conreid was Judy's house guest, Mr. Hemmingway, a rather grouchy character; Verna Felton was her friend Miz Pierce; Sheldon Leonard played Joe Crunchmiller, Judy's Brooklynese boyfriend, while the Sportmen Quartet, Gale Gordon, Elvia Allman, Mel Blanc and others completed the cast. Mel was the character appearing with her called "Pedro." His expression, "Pardon me for talking in your face, Senorita," became a household remark during the forties. Another character introduced on the Judy Canova Show was her "Cousin Ureenus" who used to eat chopped liver ice cream. On signing off Judy would sing the popular song, "Goodnight Sweetheart."

It was noted that few Americans had much contact with real hillbilly humor, but through radio's facsimile, millions of them giggled at the leading lady of pseudohillbilly comedians as she delivered ripe corn in a Deep Southern drawl. Her flair for reading corn in a raucous, drawling voice, made her one of radio's favorite personalities. Judy appeared in a number of films and was a recording artist for RCA—and originated the pigtail fad which swept the country campuses.

*VARIETY* credits Judy's appearance in 1939 as the first hillbilly act ever to appear on television. She formed her own TV production company in 1957 but was rarely seen on that medium with the exception of some guest appearances on the *HUCKLEBERRY FINN SHOW* in the late fifties. She also made an occasional rodeo appearance after retiring from radio.

—Reid G. Hansen

---

**CREDITS:** This month's cover was prepared from a drawing which appeared in *TIME* (12-17-45) with additional layout and artwork by Reid Hansen. The Cover Story retells the life story of Judy Canova who recently passed away at the age of 66 from a lingering illness. One by one the Radio Giants are being called away. "Walt Disney and Radio" was prepared by Reid with the aid of John Dunning, David R. Smith of the Disney Archives, and to Leonard Maltin, author of *THE DISNEY FILMS*, all of whom supplied valuable information. Our special thanks to them!

I have found at least one spot light appearance to plug Walt's film MELODY TIME and that was by Dennis Day. Mr. Day is known to all as the singing screwball on the Jack Benny Program, the star of A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DENNIS DAY, or the frequent guest host on FAMILY THEATRE. He also guest starred on many of radio's top shows. On June 21, 1948, Dennis guested on THE CARNATION CONVENED HOUR in a presentation of "Johnny Applesseed." Mr. Day's unique tenor voice was utilized in Walt's film in what seems to have been a perfect mesh between sound and story. Dennis was the master of dialects and used a number in the film—in fact, he took most of the speaking roles. The story was taken from American legend and was given that special Walt Disney touch. THE CARNATION CONVENED HOUR was a show of popular music which had a history of nineteen years on radio, sponsored all of its run by the Carnation Company. During the late 1940's it was part of NEC's "Monday Night of Music."

Most of Disney's entertainment was billed "for the young and old alike" type of audience. There were some programs which were strictly for children. One of these programs was called WORM WOOD FOREST. The program oozes with charm from the talking trees and flowers to the animals. One gets the impression that he is in the cartoon world of Disney. On the pretext of looking for a locale for one of his next films, some of the famous Disney characters—such as Donald Duck and his pal Mickey Mouse—joined Walt in a visit to the broadcast (1-22-49). It's strictly a guest appearance, with the early part of the show involved with the excitement of having Walt visit the show. It's an interesting piece of radio even if it was strictly an adventure type weekly children's show.

Another fun show aired during this period was THE PHIL HARRIS/ALICE FAYE SHOW. Phil's radio personality had been developed during his time as bandleader on THE JACK BENNY PROGRAM. John Dunning describes him as the "rough - cut, lovable egomaniac, of the black curly hair and the flashy cars who abused the language mercilessly and always tried to bluff his way through a problem." Phil and his wife Alice Faye had appeared on THE FITCH BANDWAGON until they got their own show in 1946. Many of the shows centered around the Harrises in rehearsals or problems with their hard-headed sponsor. One such show involved Walt Disney, although a bit indirectly. Walt was by this time working on his feature CINDERELLA, but it was not to be released until early 1950. This particular HARRIS show is catalogued for 4-30-49, nearly a year earlier. Perhaps it was simply an early plug for Walt. When Mr. Stone, Phil's sponsor, wants some entertainment for his daughter's party—something like Disney's movie CINDERELLA (this fact makes one wonder if the dates are correct) -- Remley (Elliott Lewis) readily admits that he knows Walt Disney well enough to call him by his first name, Herman. Phil also knows him and promises to have the film for the party. Phil was to work with Disney directly in the films JUNGLE BOOK and ROBIN HOOD. When they were unable to secure the film print, Phil and Remley decide to act it out for themselves. Their version turns out to be a flip-flop! Curley is Cinderella, Alice is Princess Charming, Remley is Frances, a step-brother, Mr. Scott (Gale Gordon) is the step-father, and Julius Abbruzzio (Walter Tetley) is the Fairy Godfather. The skit very loosely follows the story including size 13 EEE glass slippers. The slippers fit Remley, but he doesn't like their style! During the night the Fairy Godfather has changed feet with Cinderella (nicknamed "Shutup") and all turns out happily. The humor is broad and fun. Some of the musical bridges are Disney music, but "Some day My Prince Will Come" from Walt Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS is featured. Actually, the skit is called "Cinderella in Wonderland" so that Phil can get in the song, "Jabberwocky Bird." Walt would surely have enjoyed this spoof on the tale he was preparing for the silver screen.

Some four months before the film Cinderella was released CLUB 15 starring Dick Haymes premiered the music from the film (12-1-49). One song, "A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes," made the Hit Parade and was featured on a number of other shows, for example THE BING CROSBY SHOW. Yet another song, "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo," was given wide acceptance and promotion.

Disney had released a number of his films during the Christmas holidays up to this point .. the latest was SO DEAR TO MY HEART with young Bobby Driscoll in the lead. Disney was now elevating some human actors to the status of "honest-to-goodness" film stars. He would soon appear in TREASURE ISLAND and be Peter Pan's voice. Another cartoon feature with more than one story to tell was released in 1949 -- that would be ICHABOD and MR. TOAD (10-1-49)—utilizing the talents of Bing Crosby. The list of very famous personalities to be featured in one or more of Walt's productions was growing.

There were no other film releases in 1949, but something else was in the offerings on radio. THE RAILROAD HOUR, a show which had become a part of NEC's "Monday Night of Music," was the particular program. The show took its name from its sponsor, the Association of American Railroads, and had nothing to do with railroading. It presented the best of operetta and the musical stage, creating, during summer programs, new musical stories. The show premiered in an unusual 45 minute format on October 4, 1948, on AEC, but was trimmed to 30 minutes when it joined NEC a year later.



The program starred Gordon MacRea as its male singer and had guests from the world of music from film star Jeanette McDonald to opera star Dorothy Kirsteten to pop singer Doris Day. A host of great names guested on the program. For Christmas in 1948 the broadcast took a vehicle from the films, "Holiday Inn" starring Gordon with his guestes Martha Tilton and actor George Murphy. But on December 26, 1949, the program premiered its presentation of Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS written by Lawrence and Lee and with little Jane Powell in the title role. Many have mistaken Miss Powell for the original Snow White, but she was not. However, it is true there are a rather large number of appearances on radio in which she sang the wonderful music the Disney studio had created for SNOW WHITE. The show is a showcase for the Disney story and Music and the result is most charming. For this presentation Gordon MacRea became the narrator since the role of the prince in the film was rather unimportant. There was also one tie to the original Disney film: one of the dwarfs was brought back to participate vocally in the show. All the music in special arrangements and musical bridges make the program a delight.

Disney had not made a full-length animated feature since Barbi, although his various segmented releases were well-received, critics felt that they came nowhere near the heights reached by his initial feature-length cartoon. But Disney returned to this field with Cinderella (3-4-50), hoping that audiences would sense the obvious relationship with Snow White and create an excitement that the multi-episode cartoons lacked. It is a work of genuine charm due to skillful characterizations and storywork and, most importantly, an especially winning score. The innovations to the story are quite appealing. Who can forget the charming mice and their squeaky singing and speaking? Did all of this predate the Chipmunks and their "Chipmunk Song?" The public responded as it hadn't for any Disney feature since Barbi, and the film became one of the year's top-grossing films. The result in policy at Disney Studios was for Walt to choose two famous tales to which he would lend his famous name.

January 24, 1950, brought an appearance by Donald Duck—or at least his voice—on THE STEVE ALLEN SHOW. It is natural to assume that Walt's new film would be highlighted. Of course, with Donald you never could be sure.

THE SCREEN DIRECTORS' PLAYHOUSE came to radio rather late—January 9, 1949, but became an important radio theater. Patterned after the famous SCREEN GUILD THEATRE, it added the participation of a director from the original film and often had the original stars of the release. In adapting its presentations from the screen to the radio it gained a quick reputation for excellence. During the last year of the program, an hour long format allowed it to present some unquestionably great shows, according to John Dunning. On a Sunday evening midway through its second year (6-30-50), the presentation was Disney's Cinderella with three of the original screen stars: Ilene Woods as Cinderella, Verna Felton as the Fairy Godmother, and Eleanor Audley as the wicked Step-Mother. Ilene Woods was another of the Disney Studios stock actresses to gain some fame outside the studio. Audiences knew her voice, but mistakenly supposed her to look like Cinderella. Verna Felton had worked with Disney on the Dumbo project as Baby Dumbo's mother, and would appear as the matriarch elephant in Jungle Book and then as one of the fairies in Sleeping Beauty. Eleanor Audley would be the voice of Maleficent in that memorable film. The broadcast was quite warmly accepted by the listening audience.

As a segment of its Summer Showtrain, THE RAILROAD HOUR remembered Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs on its "Review of the Year 1937" (6-5-50). The aim of the review was to document the outstanding happenings of that year through music. Lucille Norman sang "Whistle While You Work." Even the LUX RADIO THEATER listed Snow White as one of the memorable productions on its Decade's Best press listings. Walt was certainly in good company.

Disney's next film Treasure Island (7-29-50) was undertaken in order to recover English pounds which could not be spent except in England. His choice was one of the few truly great adventure tales. Aside from several changes in the Stevenson plot, the Disney touch is most evident in the appearance of the lavish film. Again, it did not do well at the box office, although it is truly one of Disney's all-time best live-action films.

Reid G. Hansen

73

HA

BARRETT BENSON  
PO BOX 1690  
Atvada, CO 80001



John and Nancy Callow  
P. O. Box 1109  
Westminster, CO 80030